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The Girl of To-morrow---What the School Will Do For Her¹

BY

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The girl of yesterday we grown folks all know. We went to school with her, we played games with her, we went off to college with her—the same college if our lot was cast in a co-educational democracy.

The education of the girl of yesterday—we all know that too! It was the education of the boy of yesterday. It lay first of all in the public school or, in favored communities, in the kindergarten where “gifts” were expected to create in the child mind a certain worldview dreamed by a German philosopher, but where in reality social activities and games first brought little barbarians to the yoke. And through this kindergarten porch the girl of yesterday went into a graded place called a school—a sort of temple of knowledge with many great terraces, on each of which she lingered a year; and there she mastered numerals and letters and numbers and words, and learned how these odd dead things made books, readers and spellers, and more spellers and readers, and geographies and histories and grammars. Yet all this was for her only a confusion of memorized symbols and words, a veritable desert relieved by occasional vivid teaching. Outside the school it was that the girl of yesterday had her real education—on the playground, in the yard and garden at home, in the house with the family group—wherever, in fact, real interests and activities took hold on life itself and shaped mind and purpose.

From the graded school, the girl of yesterday went on to the classical high school. How wistfully and fearfully she had looked across the green to the Academy! And when the Irish janitor—rest to his soul—brought across one day the Academy skeleton “that the eighth grade children might see how they were made,” the girl of yesterday had wondered whether she must learn the 208 bones—or was it 206?—when she too reached the high

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school yonder. In due time she came there, and found it all, alas, a place of bones, not only in physiology, but bones in history—"name the presidents in order," or "who were the nine muses?" and bones in Latin—"do, dare, dedi, datum"; and often only bones in literature—"give names and dates of Scott's novels." Lucky that life went on in social groups, in school and out, and in the home!

Occasionally, the high school girl of yesterday wondered what she would do when school days were over, and of all professions teaching alone seemed open to her. All the world is a sea to the sailor, and to girls just finishing the old-time school, teaching seemed the only profession.

The old high school course—with its algebra never applied in life, its analytical study of literature, its stilted compositions, its endless translations and paradigms—employed the mind in innocent exercises. That this had somewhat of useful discipline, we will not deny, but it gave no practical training for life. As the student grew to maturity, her knowledge of the world as it is, came through outside experiences, and widened—if it did widen—more despite the high school than by virtue of it.

Of the girls of yesterday who started in the elementary school, one in ten received a high school education, and less than one in a hundred of those who finished high school went on into college. To those who went to college, education was offering at best only a continuation of the literary curriculum of the high school. Brave women in the last generation had demanded women's departments in universities, but what courses they gained were largely serving to perpetuate literary culture and to prepare for teaching. Men's colleges for a generation have been differentiating into groups of scientific and professional schools—engineering with its varied phases, law, medicine, agriculture, commerce, journalism and what not, each offering a diversified preparation for a distinct vocation. All this time the woman's college has stood by its general literary and scientific courses and against vocational specialization, until finally some one remarks in passing that "in women's colleges alone is the education of the gentleman held in its proper esteem."

The college girl of yesterday, the one in a hundred who could go on to college, found herself in a blind alley—literary

culture with its two outlooks, the life of the idle gentlewoman, or the life of the teacher, and then more literary culture. The woman of to-day—the girl of yesterday—if she is broad-minded and generous and serviceable, owes her high qualities to the formative social influences which have shaped her life, rather than to her formal education.

But the girl of to-morrow—what of her education? You will not find it embodied today in any one school, but here and there you can get partial glimpses of the world to be. Come into a certain elementary school in Manhattan where the aim is preparation for serviceable, happy living, not for pedantry. Note the equipment: a large gymnasium with apparatus suited to fixed exercises, with plenty of baths, with ample space for folk dances, pageants, drama—in short, with opportunity for all kinds of activity except swimming; there is a library and reading room where little children work during school hours, learning that books are tools to be used by all people in every practical undertaking. Each class room is equipped, not with fixed desks for parrot recitations to a parrot teacher, but with ordinary work tables and chairs suitable for working operations, for conversation, discussion and coöperation; and there are special rooms besides—a cooking room and dining room where little girls learn the wonders of bread doughs and soups, a shop room where the rougher, heavier constructive work is carried on, a sewing room for clothing projects, a club room giving place for social activities, a garden space on the roof in lieu of nature's space on the ground. Such is the building, and within it one finds life, not barren schooling. Can I say better than that each subject is lived through, not learned—that one acquires letters to read a loved story, and numbers to count and control some matter already of real concern; that one studies history to understand the puzzle of the Stars and Stripes and the devotion of the veterans on Memorial day; and geography to know why there is a valley here where the school house stands, and to know where these ships are bound that pass on the river.

The way of real education is the setting of the child's mind to solve the problems that life fixes; and this way my ideal elementary school has found. Not only in method but in content of study does it reach out into life's realities. The weakness of the old school was that it worked in a vacuum; the strength of

the new school is that its subject matter of instruction is not only literary material and scientific results (as in history and geography), but that all this and everything in its curriculum is taught as an interpretation of the work-a-day dynamic world in which we live. The new school will give to pupils at fourteen years of age intelligence regarding the various fields of work—professional practice, trade, commerce, or housekeeping—which are opening up before them and will thus aid in that most fundamental decision—the choice of a vocation. Industrial and vocational intelligence (not specific vocational training however) describes this new aim of the elementary school. Through this period, the training of both sexes will stand substantially alike, liberalizing, cultural, problem-solving, informational as regards the world just ahead.

What now of the higher schools, where the girl of to-morrow fits herself for the woman's work of the day after? Come into a certain great new technical high school in an Ohio metropolis. It has for its principal the graduate of an engineering college, and it offers courses especially for boys and courses especially for girls. Here the girl who must soon make a livelihood may prepare to be a designer in special fields, an illustrator, a house manager, a private secretary, a dressmaker, a milliner, an infant's nurse, or perhaps a skilled cook—and she is trained in such a way that she keeps a more liberal outlook on life than the specialized worker of to-day dreams of. Or go to Chicago with its promising two-year vocational high school for those who can tarry but two years after grammar school before going to work. Take notice of its system of coöperation between school and shop and factory, which successfully combines instruction and practice. And this is but an indication of a mighty revolution in education—the girl shall be taught a definite vocation (outside of home work) as well as the boy. The school shall prepare young people for practical life. The elementary school, although it will not teach vocations, shall fit children to make an intelligent choice. The high school shall give them the training they need for their elected careers; it shall offer courses of varied length and purpose—two years for those who stay only so long, four years for those who remain longer. With vocational training shall go some liberal culture, so that, ultimately, every man shall have a vocation and a free choice of avocations at his command.

The girl of to-morrow who can postpone her vocational choice shall find an opportunity in the high school to continue her liberal education; but for her benefit there shall be highly specialized schools which, when she has finished her preliminary training, will give her scientific preparation for useful work. A number of such schools are already in existence.

Go to the splendid institutes in Brooklyn, Philadelphia, Rochester, and Chicago, established by far-seeing men of wealth to train high school graduates for practical service, and canvass the training offered there to the girl of to-morrow. Preparation for household management, woman's traditional field, is provided as a matter of course—but note with what new implications and applications. First, we find hundreds of teachers of domestic science who may increase the efficiency of private housekeeping through that socializing instrument, the public school, to the end that housework may pass over into a science, as the poor decrepit farming of the last generation has become the agriculture of to-day. What of the household when methods of dry farming, irrigation, Burbanking, modern chemistry, bacteriology, and mechanics shall be turned loose within doors as well as out on the land? But new opportunities in household arts are also opening in every direction. In the Rochester institution there is a course of training in lunch-room management, in which the young women are instructed in related science, but especially in the practise of their profession by daily responsibility in conducting a lunch room for 200 students. The graduates have been quickly absorbed in Rochester by wise managers of banks, department stores, and factories; one, salaried at \$1,200, directs her French chefs and feeds the 300 employees of a department store; another manages a lunch room in a huge clothing factory, and, since her advent, saloons across the street have gone out of business. A similarly trained young woman took hold of a lunch room in St. Louis last fall, improved the service, and turned a deficit into a \$290 surplus the first month. Schools, banks, mercantile and commercial houses need the trained lunch-room manager and are discovering their need and how to fill it. It is only a step from this to the commercial lunch room. The best lunch rooms in Boston, and they are among the largest too, are today conducted by a trained woman, and they are cleaner than your own kitchen.

Even the despised delicatessen shop and the commercial bakery may yet come into the hands of the trained woman, who will give us there, on a grand social scale, the safeguards to health which in the past she provided for the private home. Again, these institutes are fitting women to conduct dressmaking shops and millinery shops as skilled business enterprises. Who knows but that escape from the robber-barons of fashion will come through the more intelligent professional standards of those who clothe us? All kinds of artistic achievement, in design, in illustration, and creative work in all the special fields for which deft fingers and the sensitive eye are essential, as well as enterprise along commercial and industrial lines, are other ventures which these practical institutes are providing for the young woman of tomorrow.

What the young man of to-morrow does, the young woman of to-morrow may also freely do if she will—and so we shall then find her occasionally, as we find her now, in the advanced professional fields of engineering, law, medicine, and the ministry. It is well so, for absolute freedom of action is the only possible basis for a wise choice of vocations. The young women who go into higher professional training will, however, fit themselves, as a general thing, for the fields of service that belong distinctively to women.

But what about a professional, specialized education for women, on a university level—an education that corresponds to the training young men receive at schools of technology? For answer, go to a certain pent-up Manhattan street and enter the business-like looking structure that stands there. In this building seven hundred young women are hard at work studying the household arts. Make inquiries about them. One is the director of a college dormitory, come for special instruction in dietetics, that the 300 girls in her charge may enjoy nutritious food while her expenditures still keep within her budget allowance. Another wishes to be a visiting dietitian, instructing in tenement homes as to the best food for the infant, the working man, and the aged. There is a group of graduate nurses, already skilled in their profession, fitting themselves for the administration of hospitals, or for teaching positions in nurses' training schools. There is a nurse who is matriculated in "laundry management" and will become the director of a hospital laundry. Here are young women

preparing in house decoration or interior decoration, others as costume designers and illustrators or as designers in special industrial fields of unending variety. Others of these young women of to-morrow have entered for diplomas in household administration and in dietetics; preparing, some for general institutional management, and others for the direction of the commissary department of institutions, such as the school and college dormitory, the asylum, the hospital, and the orphanage—undertakings that involve money, materials, and labor in factory-like quantities and for which compensation will be given according to the responsibility involved. There are curricula which prepare for the less ambitious but no less important management of the private home; and for a new field of special study, that of nursery management, which promises aid in the infant mortality campaign. Other courses prepare for sanitary inspection of markets, tenements, and food supplies, and for various kinds of service in the municipal housekeeping which now guards the private home. Graduates of these institutes will teach to all people the new science of right living, and will make it the law of the land.

Here, then, is a technical school of collegiate rank for women, devoted to the development upon a social scale of those household activities which have long been women's particular domain, and to the professional training of women not only in the conduct of the private house but also of the institution and of related industrial undertakings. What is being done in this building in Manhattan is also under way in other university centres, at Boston, Toronto, Chicago, and elsewhere. In these collegiate schools of household science and arts, which promise to be a feature of American universities as common as schools of engineering, the young woman of to-morrow will find one of her most fascinating fields of possible study.

And personal life and the private home will not suffer in the education of the girl of to-morrow. Some things seem fairly certain. Every young woman (social parasites disregarded) will be taught some useful livelihood which she will pursue at least until marriage, in some cases after, and which will be insurance if, after marriage, she is again thrown upon her own resources; every young woman will learn the elements of household management in her public school education, so that she may intelligently direct



a home, if it comes to her. The industries of the household will be increasingly organized outside the home, and she will bring to their direction her time-proved standards of devotion, rendered more effective by scientific training and professional preparation. With readjustment will come opportunity for life as well as living, and regard for liberal culture will accompany industrial efficiency; this element will be fostered in woman's education as well as in man's and to the girl of the future will be given an education not only for efficient service but for vigorous health and for liberal living.